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Objectives and Policies

draft statement

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THE PLAN FOR GOLDEN GATE PARK:

SAN FRANCISCO RECREATION AND PARK DEPARTMENT

4.9.79

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

The Plan for Golden Gate Park

Golden Gate Park is historically the most important and diverse park in San Francisco. Its 1013 acres have provided areas of pastoral retreat and places for active recreation since 1872. Local residents, regional, national, and international visitors have enjoyed and now take pleasure in Golden Gate Park; its excellent reputation is international.

Golden Gate Park is under the jurisdiction of the San Francisco Recreation and Park Commission which is concerned with the future well-being of the park. Plantings and facilities age and after many years no longer serve the purpose for which they were originally intended. Also, conservation and civic organizations as well as individuals want to participate in the retention and enhancement of the investment our community has in the park. The Objectives and Policies of the Plan for Golden Gate Park are intended to establish guidelines for preservation, use, and development of the park by a process that includes planning staff, expert advisors and community involvement. The future needs of viable institutions presently within the park must be examined, and, where appropriate, accommodated. Updating landscaping and facilities to keep pace with changes in our society will enable future generations to receive as great a living legacy as we inherited from our forebears.

The original designer of Golden Gate Park, William Hammond Hall, foresaw the park in two different regions. The parkland east of Strawberry Hill includes a variety of intensively cultivated areas and developed facilities while the parkland to the west is a pastoral landscape with open meadows defined by stands of trees and enhanced by lakes.

John McLaren, providing continuity of leadership as the Park's superintendent for fifty-six years, brought the Park's development to fruition. An experienced horticulturalist and forester, McLaren devoted his energies toward the development and protection of an abundant evergreen woodland, establishing the Park's characteristic landscape as we experience it today.

It is expected that the Plan for Golden Gate Park will retain the integrity of the original design yet will have sufficient flexibility to accommodate society's evolving needs.

Statement of Purpose
adopted by the San Francisco
Recreation and Park Commission:
March 16, 1978

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OBJECTIVE I

ACKNOWLEDGE GOLDEN GATE PARK'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE DIVERSITY OF CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE TO RESIDENTS OF SAN FRANCISCO AND THE BAY REGION: RECOGNIZE THE PARK'S IMPORTANCE AS AN AMERICAN CULTURAL RESOURCE.

The majestic beauty of the Park landscape, its cultural institutions, and its diverse recreational facilities attract a population more dispersed and numerous than that contained within the city itself. The Park provides a dynamic context for a blending of historical, cultural, and social values to meet basic human needs for beauty, tranquility, recreation, and enrichment. These unique qualities must be safeguarded for the well being and enrichment of future generations.

POLICY A

Assure that Golden Gate Park continues to play a dominant role in the overall scenic, cultural, and recreational environment that characterizes the city of San Francisco.

1. The primary function of the Park should be to provide leisure opportunities to all San Francisco residents.
2. The use of the Park should complement and be complemented by activities in other city, regional, and national recreation areas.
3. Golden Gate Park and adjoining areas, including the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Lake Merced, and Lincoln Park, should be coordinated to achieve continuity of service between each area; development of efficient interpark transport should be a primary concern.
4. The recreational needs of neighborhoods adjoining Golden Gate Park should be accommodated within those neighborhoods.

POLICY B

Urge that urban development as it occurs adjacent to Golden Gate Park be consistent with the unique qualities of the Park.

1. As the intensity of development increases it should not visually intrude upon the Park.
2. The Park should be protected from further encroachment by additional roadways.

POLICY C

Recognize that Golden Gate Park, although composed of many distinct parts and features, has, through its evolution and development, achieved completion as a unified entity.

1. All activities, features, and facilities in Golden Gate Park should be subordinate to the present design and character of the Park.
2. Where new recreational or cultural buildings are required for the enhancement of city-wide recreation resources, they should be located outside of Golden Gate Park.
3. No changes or alterations to any Park feature should occur without consideration of the Park wide effects; emphasis should only be given to activities which do not diminish open space.

POLICY C
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OBJECTIVE II

PROVIDE FOR THE PROTECTION AND RENEWAL OF THE PARK LANDSCAPE.

"A Park... should be an agglomeration of hill and dale, meadow, lawn, wood and coppice presenting a series of sylvan and pastoral views, calculated to banish all thoughts of urban objects, and lead the imagination to picture space beyond as a continued succession of rural scenes and incidents."

William Hammond Hall
November 30, 1873

POLICY A

Ensure that the essential design elements that give the Park its unique landscape character are retained and protected.

1. The major design feature of Golden Gate Park and the framework within which all Park activities occur is its pastoral landscape; the integrity of that basic design must be maintained, and most importantly, remain unaltered.
2. The existing form of wooded areas and their relationship to meadow areas should be maintained; the size, basic texture, and color of Park woods should not be significantly altered nor should the size of meadows be reduced by the introduction of additional trees.
3. It should be recognized that the Park, by design intent, is basically evergreen; large-scale introduction of deciduous or "flowering" trees in areas other than traditional horticultural gardens should be discouraged.
4. Park horticultural gardens and formally landscaped areas provide the contrast and picturesque qualities essential to complete the Park experience; the historic location and traditional horticultural usage of these features should be maintained and protected from encroachment.

POLICY B

Develop a long-range plan for effective management of the Park's forested areas.

1. A forest management plan for Golden Gate Park should be based on the following objectives:
 - a. Develop and maintain on a continuous basis a comprehensive and appropriately detailed inventory of all wooded areas.
 - b. Provide guidelines for long-term reforestation and maintenance.
 - c. Develop appropriate wood-waste recycling and utilization programs.

2. The management plan should complement existing Park reforestation programs by focusing on:
 - a. Immediate rehabilitation of the Park's windbreaks.
 - b. Removal of hazardous, diseased, and dying trees; and replacement with appropriate tree species.
3. Additional consideration should be given to aesthetics, wildlife habitat requirements, noise control, and appropriate recreational use.

POLICY C

Develop new irrigation water supplies and improved water distribution and application systems.

1. Provide consistent water pressures and volumes.
2. Improve and maintain existing well system; where feasible, restore inoperative wells.
3. The proposed Southwest Sewage Treatment Plant will generate large quantities of reclaimed waste water. This effluent, with additional treatment, should be used for parkland irrigation. Coordination between the Recreation and Park Department and other affected agencies would facilitate use of reclaimed water to irrigate Golden Gate Park, Lake Merced, Lincoln Park, the Great Highway, and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.
4. Convert meadow areas, playfields, and where feasible, large scale ornamental plantings to automated irrigation systems.

POLICY D

Establish designated wildscape areas to protect the pastoral character of the Park and ensure the retention of Park open space.

1. Areas designated as wildscape should include the Park's woodlands, scenic lakes, ponds, marshes, watercourses, and wildlife habitats.
2. Recreational use of designated wildscape areas should emphasize and encourage appreciation of the Park's pastoral qualities; appropriate activities include, but are not limited to, nature walks, birdwatching, photography, and educational pursuits.
3. No structures or additional roadways other than those required for maintenance should be allowed within designated wildscape areas; where possible, existing roads should be removed.

POLICY E

Ensure that gifts accepted for placement in Golden Gate Park will contribute to the historic character of the Park and are compatible with the planted landscape.

1. Because the Park is essentially a completed landscape, additional features tendered to the Park should be carefully reviewed prior to acceptance to assure that they will not diminish the integrity of the basic design.
2. Creation of an endowment fund to allow prospective donors to contribute to the restoration and maintenance of horticultural features and historic monuments should have a high priority.
3. All gift proposals for Golden Gate Park should be in accordance with existing Recreation and Park Commission "Guidelines for Acceptance of Major Gifts", and the policies of the Plan for Golden Gate Park.

OBJECTIVE III

PRESERVE THE OPEN SPACE OF GOLDEN GATE PARK.

POLICY A

Restrict construction of additional recreational or cultural buildings in Golden Gate Park.

1. It should be recognized that additional structures in the Park would disrupt the balance that presently exists between open space for general park use and special uses requiring buildings.

2. Special use facilities--museums, recreation centers, stadiums, restaurants--can usually be justified as having a park location; however, new facilities should be sited in areas other than Golden Gate Park.

POLICY B

Preserve notable Park landmarks of historic, architectural, and aesthetic value; encourage restoration or reconstruction of other buildings and features that provide continuity with the past.*

1. Criteria for judging historic value and design excellence should be developed and applied to all Park features. Desirable features should be rehabilitated or otherwise restored; questionable features should be removed.

2. Special and immediate effort should be made to identify, organize, and preserve existing plans and plan documents related to the design and construction of all significant Park features.

POLICY C

Assure that modification or replacement of existing Park buildings is compatible with the landscape character and historic form of the Park, and does not diminish existing open space.

1. Where replacement of an existing building in the Park is clearly in the public interest, and is compatible with the Park's landscaped environment, it should not exceed the size of the previous structure.

* Definitions: preservation, the retention and repair of existing structures or landmarks, example: the Conservatory; restoration, the more extensive work of returning a deteriorated structure or landmark to a useable condition, example: the Sharon building; reconstruction, the erection of a modern copy of a feature that no longer exists, example: Huntington Falls.

2. Structural modifications resulting in expansion of an existing facility, including The California Academy of Science, the Asian Art Museum and the M.H. deYoung Memorial Museum, should only be considered where:

- a. There is a clearly demonstrated need for a defined service to the public that cannot be met by modifications within the existing building.
- b. Sufficient, detailed proof is available that alternative sites outside the Park have been studied, and that the proposed addition can be located only in the area in question.
- c. The effects on the Park of the proposed addition have been fully assessed to ensure that expansion will not necessitate additional surface parking, access roads, or have a deleterious effect on the Park landscape.
- d. Sufficient effort will be expended to assure the very best architectural quality.
- f. Design plans for any proposed addition will include measures that will minimize visual impacts upon the Park environment.

POLICY D

Provide for the phased removal or relocation of structures or facilities which are not essential for cultural or recreational use within the Park, or for Park maintenance.

1. Until the removal of inappropriate Park structures or facilities occurs, they should be maintained only at levels consistent with existing use and safety. No additions or modifications which extend the current functions of the buildings should be permitted.

2. If a non-recreational structure can be successfully converted to a recreational use without incurring additional vehicular traffic, then re-use could be an alternative to removal.

POLICY E

Encourage development of alternative energy sources and recycling systems that would contribute to efficient management and operation of Golden Gate Park.

1. New structures, or substantially remodeled existing structures, should, where feasible, incorporate solar assisted water and space heating systems, and solar assisted cooling systems.

2. All such systems should be sited and designed in a manner compatible with the landscaped character of the Park, and with any building or structure on which such a facility may be erected or installed.

3. Existing recycling of waste materials, including animal wastes, sewage, and horticultural debris, should be intensified in order to resolve environmental and economic problems associated with Park waste disposal.

OBJECTIVE IV MINIMIZE VEHICULAR TRAFFIC.

Judicious regulation of vehicular traffic in Golden Gate Park and the gradual elimination of the private automobile as the primary mode of internal Park circulation is a desirable goal. Reducing Park automobile traffic, particularly through traffic, will necessitate changes in established driving patterns within the Park and adjoining neighborhoods. A well-financed internal Park transport system should be designed to effectively and pleasantly convey the Park visitor. Gradual, carefully planned and phased implementation, coordinated with the Department of Public Works and other agencies, will minimize vehicular traffic in a manner that will meet the needs of the Park visitor, protect the Park's environment, and reduce impacts on adjacent neighborhoods. Measures taken to minimize vehicular traffic within the Park should be in accord with the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan of the city of San Francisco.

POLICY A

Restrict non-recreational traffic to designated Park roadways in a manner that fully separates business, shopping, and commute traffic from the Park experience.

1. Established traffic patterns and volumes indicate that Crossover Drive and Kezar Drive should be the basic components of a "designated thruway" system. Private vehicular access to the Park proper should not be permitted from designated thruways.
2. Designated thruways should be screened by vegetation to minimize their visual impact.
3. Where Park circulation systems must cross a "designated thruway", grade separations should be provided.
4. Some provision should be made for cross-Park automobile movement in the western half of the Park; it should be a minor roadway in keeping with the Park's "wildscape" character.

POLICY B

Reduce the number of Park roadways.

1. Roadways that are not required for access to Park facilities, and are not part of the designated throughway system, should be removed and replaced with appropriate landscaping.
2. Access requirements should reflect concern for public safety, Park operations, internal transport, and special needs of handicapped and elderly Park visitors.

POLICY C

Provide for the gradual implementation of a transport system for the Park which would be integrated with public transit and recreational transport systems of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

1. The route utilized for any Park transport system should provide access to major facilities, features, and activity areas; existing roadway surfaces should be utilized; and where feasible, narrowed.
2. Special emphasis should be given to achieving optimum service to the Asian Art Museum, the M.H. deYoung Memorial Museum, and the California Academy of Science.
3. Internal transport vehicles should be carefully selected to ensure that the system will be energy efficient, provide adequate space for picnic and sports equipment, and most importantly, be easily used by handicapped and elderly Park visitors.
4. The gradual development of a system of visitor parking areas to accommodate a majority of Park visitors should be an integral part of an internal transport system. The major components of this system should be developed at the Kezar site and the Great Highway. Regulatory measures should be taken to assure that these facilities are available for the Park visitor.
5. Generally, parking meters, as a means of control, are not compatible with the Park environment and should not be employed.
6. Regulatory measures should be taken to make onstreet parking in neighborhoods adjoining Golden Gate Park available only to those who reside there.

POLICY D

Encourage the use of public transit for recreational travel to Golden Gate Park and adjoining recreation areas.

1. Consideration should be given to developing a comprehensive recreation transport access program for Golden Gate Park and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, cooperatively planned and developed by both jurisdictions.
2. Public transit improvements should be aimed at increasing city-wide access to Golden Gate Park; service should be frequent and convenient.
3. Foster public transit programs that will encourage the use of Parks, other than Golden Gate Park, that are now underutilized or relatively inaccessible.

POLICY E

Regulate private tour vehicle use of Golden Gate Park by designating in-Park routes and restricting tour vehicle parking to specified areas.

1. Use of Park roadways by tour vehicles should be regulated to ensure a balance between visitor service and protection of the Park's landscaped character.
2. Tour vehicle parking areas should be carefully sited to ensure that their impacts on the Park environment are minimal; additionally, landscaping should be employed to effectively screen these areas.

OBJECTIVE V

FOSTER APPROPRIATE USE OF PARK RECREATION RESOURCES.

POLICY A

Ensure that Park recreational activities are compatible with the Park's environment.

1. Events which attract large numbers of participants or spectators should continue to be regulated under the Recreation and Park Commission Policies for permit and reservation issuance to prevent degradation of the Park's landscape and reduce impacts on adjoining neighborhoods. Large gatherings may well be accommodated in other San Francisco parks, balancing the city-wide recreational program and alleviating wear and tear on Golden Gate Park. Ongoing use of Park meadow areas and athletic fields should be carefully monitored so that measures may be taken to allow adequate turf and landscape recovery time.
2. The Recreation and Park Department should provide regular supervision and recreation for children, especially at the Mary B. Connolly Children's Playground.
3. The presence of wildlife in Golden Gate Park is a valuable recreation resource and should be actively encouraged. Golden Gate Park is a suitable habitat for a great variety of birds and small mammals. Bird species range from the large and conspicuous Red-tailed Hawk to the tiny, secretive Hermit Thrush. Mammals such as squirrels, rabbits, raccoons, and weasels also inhabit the Park. Requirements for retaining a diverse and healthy wildlife are a variety of vegetation, lake and marsh environments, and a Park maintenance and reforestation program that should continue to recognize these needs.
4. Confined animal habitats in Golden Gate Park are not appropriate in wildscape areas. Development of the North American Plains exhibit at the San Francisco Zoo would allow the eventual relocation of a Park Bison exhibit. The fenced Park site presently functioning as a buffalo paddock could be restored to a condition in keeping with the character of adjacent woodlands.
5. At the present time, facilities for Park equestrian activities are located in two areas: Bercut Equitation Field and rental stables, west of Middle Lake, and the Golden Gate Equestrian Center adjacent to the Polo Field. All facilities should be consolidated at the Bercut site. Consolidation should be seen as a solution to problems associated with the Polo Field site including inadequate storage and paddock facilities, temporary boarding structures, and conflicts in having an equestrian center located in close proximity to major picnic areas.

6. The Kezar complex, including Kezar Stadium, Kezar Pavilion, parking areas, and playfield, should be redesigned to relate more effectively to general Park use. Redesign and restoration alternatives should incorporate a public parking facility, providing primary service for the activity centers in the eastern half of the Park, including Kezar Pavilion, and linked with the development of an internal transport system. Consideration should be given to the removal of Kezar Stadium or to a reduction in its size.

POLICY B

Improve and maintain Park amenities and ensure adequate visitor services.

1. Restrooms, drinking fountains, trash receptacles, benches, and telephones should be provided at convenient locations throughout the Park; these amenities should be consistent with the intensity of activity of the particular area, and should not detract visually or physically from the environmental character of the Park.

2. Concessions which utilize temporary facilities other than those facilities which are placed in an area on a single event basis should be discouraged because they detract from the visual character of the Park. Concessions which provide service on a long term and continuous basis should be located within an existing building. All vendors should establish effective litter control and an enclosed garbage disposal area.

3. Historic, environmental, educational, and general information about the Park and activities therein should be made available to the resident and visitor through programs, tours, literature, and exhibits.

4. The Park is essentially a landscaped garden; outdoor advertisements of future or existing events are a visual intrusion upon its landscaped character and should be strictly regulated. Agencies which desire to give notice of events should confine such activities to public media announcements, the Recreation and Park Department events calendar, or to an area within an existing building.

5. Security systems and police patrols should continue to be employed throughout the Park; additionally, lighting should be installed in areas receiving nighttime use. Park lighting should not detract visually or physically from the character of the Park. Mounted and motorized patrols and other high-visibility security measures should be expanded to protect the Park visitor and Park amenities. Popular use of the Park is the best way to protect it.

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